Volume 24, No. 05, January 06, 2017

Nation

New Beginnings

Coon Come's State of the Nation

Provincial Inquiry

Best of James Bay

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION NOTICE

ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNANCE IN EEYOU ISTCHEE
THE GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT AND CREE CONSTITUTION

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EEYOU ISTCHEE?

To learn more about this, consultations with Cree beneficiaries, Cree First Nations and other Cree stakeholders will take place early in 2017.

The GCC(EI)/CNG invites you to participate in this important conversation:

January 10, 2017
Waswanipi, Community Complex (Evening)

January 12, 2017
Washaw-Sibi, Hotel Amosphere in Amos (1:30 PM)

January 30, 2017
Nemaska, Sports Complex (Evening)

January 31, 2017
Waskaganish, Gathering Place (Evening)

February 1, 2017
Mistissini, Sports Complex (Evening)

February 7, 2017
Chisasibi, Mitchuap (Evening)

February 8, 2017
Eastmain, Complex Gym (Afternoon)

February 9, 2017
Wemindji, Community Hall (Evening)

March 8, 2017
Ouje-Bougoumou, Youth Center (Afternoon)

Whapmagoostui, Date and Location TBD
MoCreebec, Date and Location TBD

The Governance Agreement and Cree Constitution will strengthen Cree self-government on Category IA lands in the context of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA). They will provide us with greater autonomy and flexibility in governance within our communities and provide long-term security and predictability while allowing us to retain the same local and regional government powers, functions, and responsibilities.

For information, please contact:
Lillian Loon, *Executive Assistant to Executive Director*
Tel: **(613) 761-1655** | Email: **lillianl@cngov.ca**

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Demera MacLeod expecting one of the first babies of 2017
Photo by
Catherine Quinn

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Christmas memories

by Will Nicholls

Ah, the night before Christmas and all through the houses children were fighting not to go to bed in the hope of seeing Santa. At least that was the excuse my five-year-son Hunter was giving me. He wanted to talk to the big man about some gifts he really, really wanted. My favourite was his desire for a jet pack. He didn't believe they that they don't actually exist. We told him the technology wasn't up to a real one but TV doesn't lie at that age. We explained that if he were to use one as they appear on television that it would toast his hindquarters.

That lent itself to a few fart flambé and smoking underwear jokes that I won't repeat here out of respect for Green Party leader Elizabeth May.

Then he wanted some of the candies I was setting aside. I explained they were bribes to Santa so I would get a really nice gift. Hunter then asked me quietly if I would bribe Santa for him too! But only if he was good and went to sleep. I said Santa doesn't come and drop off presents while children are awake. That made sense, but Hunter still needed to be chased back to bed three or four times. All parents know that time of "I want a drink of water," and, "I need to go the bathroom" and so on.

Then of course there is the early morning wake-up. I left the bedroom door partly open having tried to get up early on Christmas morning myself in my younger days. But that was way back then. After a certain age at home we'd open up the presents just after midnight so we could sleep in. Those days are thing of the past for next 15 or so years.

Just before 5 am I was awakened by a door being quietly opened. Yes, it was Hunter trying to get a look at whether or not Santa had arrived. I told him to join me as we were letting people sleep in until 6 am. I am the soul of generosity at this time of year. We talked for the next hour about all kinds of things that dads and sons talk about. I also threw in a few homilies about sharing, being considerate to others, gentle versus forceful love and how to make and keep friends.

Then it was wake-up time. Holding back Hunter while grandma and mom got some coffee into them was a task and a half. He recognized every gift that was his by his name.

His joy and happiness was contagious and shared by everyone. This is the first year he has been so into Christmas. He was a shepherd at the church play. My son Declan played the baby Jesus. I have great memories of Christmas past but realized then and there that Christmas present was going to be a great memory. Christmas future I am sure will bring many more.

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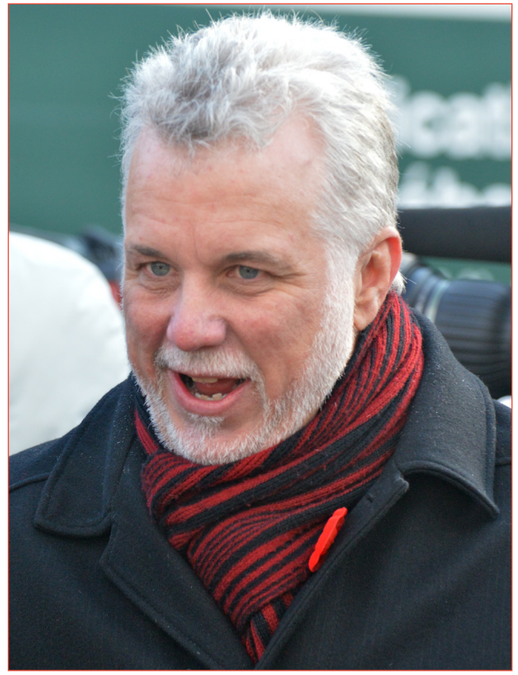

Change of heart

by Joshua Grant

Couillard government announces **independent inquiry** into Quebec Indigenous relations

It was a long time coming but Quebec's First Nations, and the women who so bravely came forward to share their allegations of abuse at the hands of the Val-d'Or SQ detachment, will finally get the provincial judicial inquiry that they have demanded for more than a year.

The inquiry will look at the treatment of Indigenous communities by public institutions including police, correctional services, youth protection and health systems. Education appears to have been left out of the equation.

The Liberal government had staunchly resisted an independent judicial inquiry. But on December 21 Premier Philippe Couillard joined Public Security Minister Lucie Charlebois and Justice Minister Stéphanie Vallée, as well as AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard and Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come, at the press conference to announce to announce that there would be an inquiry after all.

Progress, reconciliation and confidence were Couillard's words of the day as he promised a "frank" and "honest" look at Quebec's justice system. While he said the inquiry wouldn't re-examine the abuse allegations against SQ officers in Val-d'Or, it will look at systemic relations between the region's police and Indigenous population and aim to complement the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

"It's not about blame or vengeance," Couillard said in his statement. "The need for justice is felt by everyone and there are clearly some systemic problems. [The inquiry] will allow us to address these issues and analyze without prejudice… the actions that must be taken so that everyone can live in a climate of trust rather than suspicion and worry, of openness rather than contempt… of reconciliation and progress."

Superior Court Justice Jacques Viens, who spent 25 years working in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, will lead the commission. It is scheduled to take two years to complete, concluding on November 30, 2018.

While he said the inquiry will not re-examine the abuse allegations against SQ officers in Val-d'Or, it will look at **systemic relations** between the region's police and Indigenous population

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Justice and Correctional Services
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Waswanipi:	819-753-2770
Wemindji:	819-978-3300
Whapmagoostui:	819-929-3796

If you have any additional questions or need more information, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val d'or at 819-874-2600 or by email at justice.valdor@cngov.ca.

www.creejustice.ca

Picard and Coon Come expressed their gratitude for the government's decision but stressed that there is still much work to be done.

"Our women have the right to feel secure, something that so many people take for granted," said Picard. "We're open to dialogue with the authorities of the Sûreté du Québec to work together to re-establish a climate of confidence and harmony."

"I do not have the luxury to be silent," stated Coon Come. "I have three daughters and three granddaughters and I think we all agree that we want to make the world a better place for them.

"This inquiry will enable women and men to share their experiences and find solutions. Indigenous people, police officers and other stakeholders will be able to work together to solve problems."

In his statement, the Grand Chief said there is a lack of training for police officers, and a lack of social services and resources to address the needs.

Coon Come acknowledged the family of Sindy Ruperthouse and the women who came forward as part of Radio-Canada's *Enquête* program last fall. Its investigation into the stories of Indigenous women who said certain Val-d'Or SQ officers took them on starlight tours and offered them money and drugs in return for sexual favours shocked the province. Coon Come said that it is thanks to their courage and perseverance that this inquiry is happening.

The Grand Chief also commended Val-d'Or mayor Pierre Corbeil for his work in handling the crisis and for teaming up with First Nations organizations to work towards improving relations with Natives in Val-d'Or and nearby communities.

"The Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee intends to collaborate directly with both commissions and work towards real reconciliation," Coon Come said.

The provincial inquiry will analyze the relationship between Quebec and Indigenous communities over the past 15 years, hear directly from First Nations, police and other communities affected by what transpired in Val-d'Or and, should the commission deem it necessary, look look into Indigenous relations in other regions of Quebec as well.

Endangered herd

by Joshua Grant

Sport hunt remains open despite plummeting population of Leaf River caribou

The Grand Council of the Crees, the Naskapi Nation and the Nunavik Inuit have together called on the government of Quebec to cancel the 2017-2018 sport hunt, so far to no avail. The latest results show that the herd has reached its lowest recorded population with a summer census and fall classification census putting the herd at around 181,000 caribou – an alarmingly low number compared to the 2011 tally of 430,000.

On December 21, the Cree Nation Government's Environment and Remedial Works department met with the Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks to discuss measures to protect the Leaf River herd while still allowing harvest rights for those who depend on caribou as a source of food.

However, Minister Laurent Lessard rejected the request to close the 2017-2018 sport harvest, opting to instead cut the number of hunting permits issued in the coming year by 50%. While Lessard did agree to cancel the sport hunt of 2018-2019, Nadia Saganash, Wildlife Management Administrator for the Cree Environment and Remedial Works department, says the current population levels simply cannot sustain any more sport hunting.

"At the moment the [Leaf River herd] population is not even able to sustain our own guaranteed level of harvest," Saganash told *the Nation*. "Our position is still the same, we're requesting the closure of the sport hunt based on the principle of priority of harvest for the Native people."

> "We recognize that this will have economical impacts on outfitters, including our own Cree outfitters, but the impacts of the herd's extinction will be far greater on the food security and culture of the Native people. **The survival of a people and their traditions must be considered** a priority over commercial activity."
> – Isaac Voyageur, *Director of Environment and Remedial Works, Cree Nation Government.*

Saganash said that the ministry has already announced measures to be taken concerning the caribou population for next year, officially confirming that the 2017-2018 sport hunt will remain open, with the 50% reduction in permits.

"We still don't understand why the Quebec government wants to continue this," she said. "By continuing the sport hunt they're jeopardizing even further the capacity of the Native people to feed themselves."

According to Saganash, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement established the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee as a "preferential and exclusive" committee with respect to the management of caribou. She says Quebec's disregard of the committee's recent recommendation to close the sport harvest represents a clear breach of these agreements and infringes upon the rights of the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi signatories.

"The level of population just doesn't allow for a sports hunt right now," Saganash argued. "An additional 1000, even 300-400 caribou being taken is too much and ultimately Natives will suffer the consequences and have themselves reduce their harvest. We're already working with the communities to reduce their harvest, but by continuing the sports hunt they're just aggravating the situation.

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In Brief

Native Montreal seeking **input on housing project**

Native Montreal will be conducting questionnaires, hosting focus groups and organizing a public consultation on a new housing project February 12 at the Sheraton Montreal. The organization wants to hear from First Nations people who live in the city on housing issues to help develop a project that responds "to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginals living in the Greater Montreal area."

Focus groups will consist of 6-8 people. The goals of the housing project consultations are to determine what type of housing meets individual needs, improve living standards, discuss the challenges faced by First Nations trying to access housing in Montreal and look at potential innovative elements that could be incorporated into the project.

Focus groups will take place Sunday, January 15 at 1 pm, Thursday, January 19 and Tuesday, January 24 at 6 pm at the Native Montreal office, 2306 Sherbrooke Street East. Participants will be served a meal and receive a small gift. Activities for children, a buffet and paid parking will be provided those who take part in the consultation at the Sheraton on February 12.

For more information, please contact Andréanne Langlois-Côté at 514-331-6587, extension 207, or alangloiscote@nativemontreal.com.

DeBeers sued over **alleged mercury cover-up**

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's Wildlands League is taking DeBeers Canada to court, alleging that the mining company is underreporting on mercury contamination caused by the Victor diamond mine outside Attawapiskat.

After studying the Victor mine and its reporting protocol, Toronto-based Wildlands League filed a private prosecution in early December claiming that DeBeers violated its agreement with Ontario by neglecting to report on the mercury levels at five of nine water-monitoring stations near the Victor site.

The buildup of mercury and methylmercury in waterways poses a threat to fish, land animals and humans. The Wildlands League is specifically concerned about contamination near the mouth of Attawapiskat's Granny Creek. As part of its agreement with Ontario, DeBeers is required to self-monitor and report on the levels in the waterways near their open-pit Victor mine.

The government is "failing to provide proper oversight," said Anna Baggio of the Wildlands League. "The self-monitoring experiment isn't working as it should."

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change says it will review the details of the legal action and noted that De Beers is subject to "strict and detailed terms and conditions" surrounding the reporting and monitoring at the mine."

State of the NATION

Reflecting on 2016 and looking forward to the New Year with Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come

By Amy German

While Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come says the Cree of Eeyou Istchee have fared well in 2016, there is still much work ahead and justice must be sought.

From the economy to the women of Val-d'Or, the Grand Chief discusses what really is to blame when it comes to the Cree Nation's most vulnerable, talks about the maturing of Cree entities and living in a world where systemic racism is rampant for both the Indigenous here at home and abroad.

Let me first of all thank "*The Nation*" for the opportunity to express my views on the state of the Cree Nation. This is an occasion which I look forward to every year as another means by which the Cree Nation leadership can inform our people about our accomplishments, our setbacks, and our assessments of how we are doing in fulfilling what we set out to do.

The Nation (TN): How did the Cree fare in 2016?

Grand Chief (GC): Generally, we are doing very well. We are continuing to move forward in accordance with our nation-building agenda. We continue to have our rights within our territory recognized and we continue to translate the recognition of those rights into tangible benefits for our communities and for our people. This is what successive leaders of the Cree Nation have set out to do and this is what we are continuing to do wherever an opportunity arises. We continue to be convinced every day of the wisdom of this approach and it has reaped enormous benefits for our people.

TN: What was your greatest accomplishment on behalf of the CNG?

GC: There is not one accomplishment that stands out for me as significantly greater than others. In fact, we have many accomplishments that we can all take pride in. We have made important strides in the area of forestry in implementing the agreement related to the Baril-Moses arrangement. We have secured a commitment from Quebec to upgrade the badly deteriorated James Bay Highway. We have entered into the second phase of the Eeyou Communications Network development. We have secured a commitment from Quebec to establish a new Adult

Education Centre in addition to 40 housing units. We have initiated an important innovation in training for Aboriginal youth in the area of economic development through the Martin Family Initiative which is a unique program developed by former prime minister Paul Martin in collaboration with the Cree School Board and Quebec.

I am proud to say that we have begun construction of women's shelters in the communities of Waswanipi and Waskaganish. We have assumed chairmanship of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government. We have successfully participated in discussions with Quebec to acknowledge customary adoptions and to develop the procedures and protocols for recognizing them within our communities. And the list goes on.

So, as you can see our accomplishments have been many and they have covered a wide range of areas and sectors that are vital to the health of our communities and they will contribute to the overall positive development of the Cree Nation.

TN: What was your biggest challenge?

GC: My biggest challenge has been in having to continually address issues of systemic racism within the major institutions in Quebec. I am, of course, referring to the situation in Val-d'Or where we have had to take positions and measures to ensure the safety of our Indigenous women who were subjected to abuse at the hands of the Sûreté du Québec (SQ).

At a time in our history when we have made such major gains in the development of harmonious relationships with non-Cree communities within the region, and at a time when we have made such tremendous gains in having our rights acknowledged, I have felt disappointment that we still need to point out, and fight against, continuing systemic racism. And it is a huge disappointment to me that the most vulnerable among our people are subjected to abuse at the hands of the representatives of law and justice in Quebec.

We were also very disappointed at the recently released report undertaken by the Montreal police which exonerated all the SQ officers in the Val-d'Or area and found no grounds for charging any of the officers against whom allegations were made. This has left our women

Photo by Mike Phang

"We have initiated an important innovation in training for aboriginal youth in the area of economic development through the Martin Family."

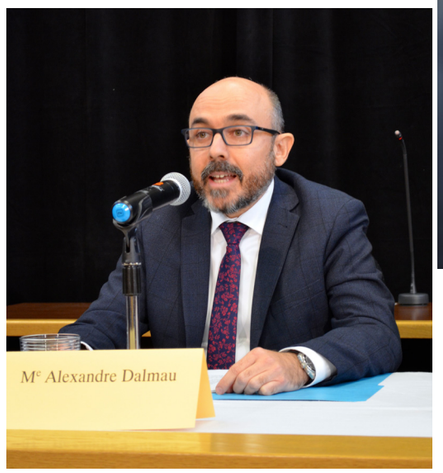

Photo by Trish Chiasson

"At a time in our history when we have made such major gains in the development of harmonious relationships with non-Cree communities within the region, and at a time when we have made such tremendous gains in having our rights acknowledged, I have felt disappointment that we still need to point out, and fight against, continuing systemic racism."

feeling even more vulnerable and distrusting of the system which is supposed to be protecting them. The report concluded that they could not say that the alleged events did not occur, but that they could not be proven. Well, we believe our women! And we also think that the evidentiary basis for these kinds of allegations needs to be reconsidered and revised. And, most importantly, we will not stop until we obtain justice for our brave women.

Right now, there is no existing mechanism for getting at the truth. This is why we have argued for, and in fact we have tabled the terms of reference for, an independent provincial inquiry which will have the powers to get at the truth. This will continue to be our focus.

At this time, our efforts will be directed at addressing the systemic racism within the SQ and the specific allegations by Indigenous women in the Val-d'Or area. Our focus will not be on the town of Val-d'Or. In fact, we applaud the efforts that Mayor Pierre Corbeil has taken to lead his community in a new and positive direction in order to establish more positive relations with the Indigenous peoples of the area.

We are committed to getting at the truth and we will not be deterred. We will not accept that there is no problem with the SQ and we will not allow this issue to disappear in the context of the federal Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. This is a Quebec issue and we will settle for nothing less than an independent provincial inquiry.

TN: What was it like for the CNG to have other Entities within the Cree Nation hold their own AGAs?

GC: When some of our regional entities announced that they would be holding their own independent Annual General Assemblies, I thought then and continue to believe, that this is a very good direction which these entities have taken. To me, it represents a certain maturing on the part of these entities and reflects a desire on their part to be more transparent in the reporting they do to our people. Too often, the reports that they have provided at the Annual General Assemblies of the Cree Nation/Cree Nation Government have needed to be in very summary form and there really has not been the opportunity to engage in a full discussion of the vision and direction of these entities. By having their own multi-day assemblies, the opportunity will be created for a

"My objective in going there was to share our experiences and to encourage the people there **not to give up."**

"THE STRUGGLE IS NOT OVER"

full airing of concerns and issues which our people may have, and there will be a much greater opportunity for our people to have a direct voice in the future of these entities. I think this is all for the good and I welcome it.

TN: You yourself went to Standing Rock. While they have made some gains, this certainly isn't over. What kind of an impact do you think that the Crees had on this battle and what advice would you give them at this point in time?

GC: Yes, that is correct. I was honoured to be invited to represent the Cree Nation at this important milestone in the history of Indigenous peoples of North America. This ongoing protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline has brought together Indigenous groups in Canada and the U.S. in a common Indigenous struggle against a project which has not received the consent of the Indigenous people on whose lands the project would be built, and it has been deemed by the affected Indigenous peoples as harmful to the long-term protection of the environment.

I had the opportunity to demonstrate the direct support of the Cree Nation in the efforts by the Standing Rock Sioux to assert their rights and work for the protection of the environment. We were able to provide food for approximately 1500 people at the site of the protest. In addressing the people camped out at Standing Rock I shared the history of our own struggles and I shared some of the political strategies we adopted in opposing hydroelectric development which was being proposed for our traditional lands also without our consent.

My objective in going there was to share our experiences and to encourage the people there not to give up. I told them how important it was for them to control the agenda so that they would not be constantly reacting to the agenda of other people and other forces. I told them that by controlling the agenda they would eventually create the leverage needed to move things in a positive direction. They have enjoyed some success in recent weeks yet their struggle is not over. We will keep a close eye on this situation and we will continue, if asked, to share our experiences.

TN: How did the Cree Nation fare economically in 2016?

GC: Our economy continues to make progress. We continue to identify employment opportunities within our communities as well as opportunities for our local and regional enterprises to create further employment and contracting possibilities to develop our Cree economy.

We have concluded several Impact and Benefit Agreements with mining companies and we will soon begin to reap the benefits associated with these agreements. They all contain clauses that provide for hiring priorities for Cree people as well as priorities for local and regional Cree enterprises.

Air Creebec and the Cree Construction and Development Corporation have benefitted significantly from the agreements that the Cree Nation has successfully concluded, and this has resulted in further opportunities for our people.

We have been able to ensure these benefits are made available to our people while, at the same time, including measures which protect the Cree Way of Life for the benefit of those of us who continue to live a traditional way of life. We continue to work to ensure that our people have the choice of either continuing a traditional way of life or participating in the modern economy. This, for us, is a fundamental principle and we will continue to ensure that all of our agreements and all of our major achievements reflect this fundamental Cree principle.

TN: Also, with health concerns about obesity and rampant diabetes, how do you feel about the health of the Cree Nation and what would you like to see done?

GC: There is no question that there is an epidemic of diabetes within Indigenous communities across the country, and unfortunately, the Cree Nation communities of Eeyou/Eenou Istchee are no exception. Approximately one in four Cree people suf-

"Air Creebec and the Cree Construction and Development Corporation have benefitted significantly from the agreements which the Cree Nation has successfully concluded."

"Our economy continues to make **progress"**

fer from obesity, diabetes or related illnesses. There is no question about the seriousness of this issue in our communities and our Nation and we continue to support the efforts of our Cree Board of Health and Social Services to undertake the relevant research and to put into place the necessary creative programs and services that will both curb the current levels of diabetes and put into place creative preventive measures that will put an end to the epidemic levels. I have always maintained that as long as our people need to address basic health challenges and social issues, we will be less able to address and take advantage of the economic opportunities that lie before us. So, yes we must do everything we can to tackle epidemic diabetes and other issues in our communities because, in a very direct and immediate way, our future depends on it.

TN: How do you feel about the new reality of a man like Donald Trump running the White House?

GC: The Cree Nation has always taken the view that we will not pronounce on whether or not we agree with the head of any government that has been duly elected by its people. If we are presented with the need to deal directly with any government, we will do that in a way that protects and furthers the interests of our Cree Nation and we will work with any government that is in place to accomplish that. This holds just as true for what takes place on the other side of the border.

TN: Closer to home how would you rate Prime Minister Trudeau? Some First Nations have expressed their disappointment with what they see as promises not being kept. How has the CNG's experience been so far?

GC: My own view is that it is still too early to make general statements about the Trudeau government's success or failure to appropriately address Indigenous issues. Certainly, the elevation of importance of Indigenous issues that was reflected at the outset of this government when letters were sent by the prime minister to all the new ministers expressing the intention to resolve long-standing Indigenous issues was very significant. So was the statement that there is no relationship more important to this government than the one between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

I was also encouraged at the establishment of the federal Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the recently announced establishment of an independent Indigenous school board in Manitoba. I was also pleased to see that the new government significantly increased its envelope of new monies targeting the improvement in living conditions on reserves across the country.

I have been less encouraged with the way this government is addressing the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We were hopeful that the new government would move to adopt the Bill put forward by MP Romeo Saganash that would result in a process for reviewing all Canada's new legislation to ensure compliance with the principles of the Declaration. Unfortunately, this was not the case. And, further, I believe this government has more work to do in understanding and dealing with those resource development projects affecting Indigenous lands where the affected communities say 'No' to a project.

In our own relations with the government of Canada we are continuing to attempt to conclude an important governance agreement and we remain hopeful that we will be able to resolve all the remaining outstanding issues in the very near future. This will be our own test of the new government's commitment to a progressive Indigenous agenda.

TN: What are the plans for the Cree Nation in the coming year?

GC: For the last several years we have made, as one of our top priorities, ensuring that we are doing everything we can to promote and establish effective capacity-building strategies. We remain committed to this objective and we will continue to have this high on our list of priorities for the coming year. In a very real sense, the future of the Cree Nation lies with our youth, and the Cree Nation will continue to grow and thrive depending on how well-prepared our current youth will be to assume responsibility for managing the affairs of our Cree Nation – from the local level to the national level to the regional level; and how prepared they will be to take on the employment opportunities which will become available in the region in the years ahead.

"In our own relations with the Government of Canada we are continuing to attempt to conclude an important governance agreement and **we remain hopeful** that we will be able to resolve all the remaining outstanding issues in the very near future."

As I mentioned earlier, I am very hopeful that we will be able to enhance our local governance through the conclusion of an agreement with Canada to expand even further the range of authority, jurisdiction and responsibility for important areas of community life.

We will, of course, continue to do what we must in order to protect Indigenous women in the Val-d'Or area, and we will continue to press the government of Quebec to establish an independent provincial inquiry to seriously address the allegations against members of the Val-d'Or SQ. If any Indigenous person in the Val-d'Or area is vulnerable to the abuse of authority and the abuse of power, then we are all vulnerable. This will remain a priority for the Cree Nation and for me personally.

I would also like to mention that we have initiated a very important project to address the severe housing shortage in our communities. We have developed a model that, on a very comprehensive basis, will begin to address the serious housing situation in our communities in a way that is responsible and responsive to the needs of our people. We will continue with our community consultations and begin to establish a system that addresses the financing, the construction and the legal elements of housing while being sensitive to the economic and cultural factors of the Cree Nation. We realized that we cannot wait for governments to solve this problem and we are creating a Cree-made solution to the housing crisis. We will do this in a way that maximizes the employment and other economic benefits and spin-offs for our communities. This is an exciting opportunity and I look forward to seeing us realize this potential.

As you know, 2017 will once again be an election year. The people of the Cree Nation will have an opportunity to make their voices heard about the governance of the Cree Nation, the direction we having been going in and the priorities which candidates may express. I would encourage all voters to participate actively in the election process and to make their concerns and desires known. This is how our democracy works and we should all embrace this opportunity to have our voices taken into account in this upcoming election.

Photo by Hyungu Kang

"I would like to extend my best wishes to the people of the **Cree Nation."**

TN: Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

GC: At the time of this interview, we are entering the holiday season and I would like to extend my best wishes to the people of the Cree Nation, to the people who work in all our entities to continually improve the quality of life in our communities, and to all our friends throughout Eeyou Istchee and beyond a very Merry Christmas, a happy holiday season, and all the best in the New Year. May it be a time for us all to spend quality time with our families and renew our energies for the tremendously exciting work that lies ahead for all of us.

Meegwetch.

CHISASIBI SWIMMING POOL CENTER
Kaanihtaauchimaahch
SWIM MEET CALENDAR
Kaanihtaauchimaahch Intra-Club
February 24 and 25
Chisasibi 1st Annual Invitational Swim Meet
March 18
ADMISSION FEES
$5 Adult (18 to 64 years old)
$3 Youth & Elders (3-17 years old / 65+)
Admission fees go towards Kaanihtaauchimaahch Swim Team fundraising
Chisasibi Swimming Pool Center
T: 819-855-2775 poolcoord@chisasibi.ca

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This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada
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marc-andre@nord-select.qc.ca Delivery to James Bay - C.O.D.

Photo by Trish Chiasson

How the Eeyouch made out in 2016 **according to Abel Bosum**

WHERE WE ARE AS A PEOPLE

By Amy German

Quebec-Cree negotiator Abel Bosum can be as tough and as quick-witted as a tiger when it comes to defending and negotiating for his people. The following is his review for *the Nation* of Cree-Quebec relations over the past year.

A Commission of Inquiry on Indigenous People and Public Services

1. In October 2015, Radio-Canada reported on allegations by Indigenous women in Val-d'Or of serious misconduct by members of the Sûreté du Québec. These allegations led other Indigenous persons to share their own experience of discrimination and misconduct by members of police forces.

2. The GCC(EI)/CNG has worked actively with the AFNQL and affected Algonquin First Nations to establish a provincial judicial commission of inquiry to look into the systemic issues underlying such misconduct. The government of Quebec at first resisted such a commission of inquiry on the grounds that it would duplicate the work of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

3. After intense discussions over a period of months, the government of Quebec now appears receptive to creating a provincial judicial commission of inquiry to look into systemic issues affecting a number of public services for Indigenous people, including police, corrections, justice, health and social services and youth protection. As of this writing, we are optimistic that an announcement will be made shortly in this regard.

B. Forestry Harmonization Agreement

4. Cree and Quebec representatives have provisionally agreed on the texts of the Forestry Harmonization Agreement to replace Chapter 3 of the Paix des Braves and to amend Section 30A of the JBNQA, the Confidentiality Agreement to replace the 2006 Confidentiality Agreement and two letters of agreement regarding forestry consultations in respect of the Baril-Moses modalities and the Southern Waskaganish traplines.

5. At a special meeting held by conference call on April 22, Council-Board approved the Consolidated Harmonization Agreement and authorized its signature, with such adjustments as the Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief consider advisable. The Agreement is now being reviewed by the Quebec government ministries with a view to its final approval.

C. Cree – Québec Table on the Environment and Protected Areas

6. It has been agreed to establish a special Cree-Quebec negotiations table on the Environment and Protected Areas. This table will act as a high-level forum to discuss any issues related to the environment and protected areas in the Eeyou Istchee – James Bay Territory.

7. Terms of reference have been developed for this negotiations table on the Environment and Protected Areas and submitted to Environment Quebec. As proposed by the Cree, this table could address the following matters, among others:

(a) implementation of Cree Regional Conservation Strategy;

(b) identification of additional protected areas;

(c) relationship between protected areas and the fight against climate change, including the possible use of the boreal forest for sequestration of atmospheric carbon dioxide and for carbon storage;

(d) implementation of measures for the recovery of woodland caribou habitat and of the precautionary approach for the interim protection of woodland caribou habitat;

(e) integrated management mechanism for water resources on the basis of hydrological units, including watersheds, sub-watersheds and groups of watersheds;

(f) such other matters as Quebec and the CNG may agree upon from time to time.

D. Innu of Mashteuiatsh

8. Positive discussions have taken place with the Innu of Mashteuiatsh with a view to establishing a Cree-Mashteuiatsh negotiations table to address possible cooperation on territorial interests and jurisdiction, hunting, fishing and trapping, joint management of certain specific sectors and consensus measures for forestry management, with special attention to the protection of wildlife habitat. Any such negotiations will be carried out in close consultation with the Cree Nations of Mistissini and Ouje-Bougoumou.

E. Energy

9. Under the direction of Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark and Director Isaac Voyageur, the Land Use Planning Unit of the CNG Department of Environment and Remedial Works is advancing the work to define the composition and mandate of the Eeyou Planning Commission provided for in the Cree – Québec Governance Agreement. It is anticipated that community consultations will take place in the near future.

F. Energy

10. In April 2016, the Government of Québec released its 2030 Energy Policy and in June 2016, Hydro-Québec issued its Strategic Plan 2016-2020. These documents note that Hydro-Québec currently has a buffer or surplus equivalent to more than 4% of Québec's annual electricity needs. New energy supplies will only be authorized when the surplus is on the order of 2.5% of Québec's annual electricity needs, not expected until at least 2024. Hydro-Quebec is unlikely to require additional energy supply before then.

G. Quebec Fuel Tax

11. After its approval by the GCC(EI)/CNG and the Cree First Nations, the Fuel Tax Settlement Agreement was signed with the with the Government of Québec in September 2016. This Agreement provides for Québec to pay the nine Cree First Nations a total amount of $8.5 million to refund fuel tax paid between 1991 and 2001.

H. Firearm Registry

12. On April 5, 2016, the Grand Chief presented the brief of the GCC(EI)/CNG on Bill 64, the Firearms Registration Act, to the National Assembly. The brief stated that concerns for public security and safety in relation to firearms must be balanced with the constitutionally protected treaty rights of the Cree, including our traditional and harvesting rights. We indicated openness to the establishment of a provincial firearms registry, provided that it is adapted to fully respect Cree rights and the realities of the Cree hunting culture. We will follow-up with Québec regarding a technical table to consider the adjustments needed for the Cree.

New Year's reflections

by Nation Staff

Eeyou Istchee's hopes, challenges and achievements

As we do every year, *the Nation* asked several leading figures in Eeyou Istchee to reflect on 2016 and look ahead to 2017 in respect to their organization and the Cree Nation as a whole. Here are the responses from a handful of Cree movers and shakers to the following three questions:

What was **your greatest accomplishment** or achievement on behalf of your organization for 2016?

Looking back over the past year, what was the **largest challenge** faced by you or your organization and how did you overcome it?

What are your **hopes and plans** for the New Year?

Isaac Voyageur
Director of Environment and Remedial Works Department
Cree Nation Government

I would like to acknowledge God for his many blessings on the Cree Nation, our leadership for its continued support, the staff of the Environment and Remedial Works Department for their commitment in ensuring Cree Rights are respected and my family for their understanding and continued support.

Greatest achievements: Concluding negotiations on new forest harmonization agreement, and successfully launching a planning branch of the Environment Department.

Largest Challenge: Managing the growth of the Department in relation to new commitments made through new agreements (e.g. Governance, Baril-Moses Agreements). We overcame this challenge by being adaptable and carefully listening to the views and recommendations of all staff members.

Hopes and plans for the New Year: that the Cree Nation continues to progress and prosper.

The Regional General Assembly was a great success and the Cree School Board received many compliments on the assembly.

Kathleen J. Wootton
Chairperson
Cree School Board

Perhaps the biggest challenge for both the staff and commissioners of the Cree School Board was organizing the first Regional General Assembly. The Regional General Assembly was a great success and the Cree School Board received many compliments on the assembly.

Another highlight was the recent visit from former Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Paul Martin, to launch the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program in Mistissini. We look forward with anticipation to realize the new training center project.

As always, the Cree School Board looks forward to serving the Cree Nation in the New Year.

On behalf of the Cree School Board, I wish everyone in the Eeyou-Eenou Istchee, a wonderful Christmas holiday. May all your dreams come true for 2017 and may you all have a peaceful, prosperous New Year.

Donald Nicholls
Director of Justice and Correctional Services
Cree Nation Government

It is hard to say what it is the key achievement of last year; we have built new facilities, services and programs, and launched new funds that create partnerships with communities, organizations and individuals in areas of crime prevention, rehabilitation, reintegration and youth engagement. One of those achievements was our ability to use a secure network to link trials throughout the Cree Nation without other parties having to leave their communities or even when they are outside of Eeyou Istchee. It reduces costs, hardships and makes the process more accessible to people. We also use technology for over 120 hearings per year.

One of the challenges we faced last year was with the Funds program. As the Funds process was new, there was a lag in the payment process related to successful applicants. We were able to set up a new system with Finance to facilitate more timely allocation of funds. We also set up a reconciliation process to allow us to measure the efficiency by which we allocate under the Funds program.

Our plans for the New Year are to continue to work with communities and partners in the development of needed facilities, services and programs. We have looked at a number of measures that will improve not only our services but that of other stakeholders in the Cree Nation. We are working to look at ways we can deliver these with other entities to address underlying needs of those entering our systems when we can intervene earlier, and to reduce recidivism of those returning to our communities.

Our plans for the new year are to **continue to work with communities and partners** in the development of needed facilities, services and programs.

Bella Moses Petawabano
Chairperson
Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

I am very proud of the 2016 Eeyou/Eenou Regional General Assembly on Health and Social Services held in Waskaganish in April 2016. This three-day event brought together stakeholders from all levels from across Eeyou Istchee in a participatory process where everyone's voice counted resulted in a list of priorities which will help guide the CBHSSJB's new Strategic Regional Plan: Shaping the Future of Miyupimaatisiiun.

In the past year we have transformed the way we approach transportation, lodging and food service for our clients travelling south for medical treatment. We did this by listening to the voice of the people, including listening to and responding to complaints.

Through a partnership with Air Creebec, we now bring people to Val-d'Or and Montreal by charter flight, in greater comfort, and with a nurse on board the plane.

The environment at Espresso Hotel is completely different from what it was a year ago, with renovated rooms and three beautiful spaces just for our Cree clientele: a cheyamaougamikw (spiritual room), piminûwhaûgamikw (community kitchen), and sabtuan (activity room). The place is warm and welcoming, a home away from home for Eeyouch and Eenouch who are in the difficult situation of having to come to Montreal because of illness.

Services will continue to improve under what used to be called Cree Patient Services, and which is now called Wiichihiituwin (helping one another). My goals for the coming year include beginning work on the Strategic Regional Plan, which will guide our organization for years to come, and continuing the important work we have been doing with the Cree Nation Government to advocate for the recognition of customary adoption in the Quebec Civil Code.

In the past year we have transformed the way we approach transportation, lodging and food service for our clients travelling south for medical treatment.

Christmas glow

by Sonny Orr

Rez Notes

It was near the end of office-party season just before Christmas many moons ago. I was rushing out of a well-known hotel in downtown Montreal into a nasty day, with the wind blowing snow twisters down the street and spinning tires howling away. The grey, slushy frozen crap that turns you into a clay statuette thanks to a slight slip of a shoe made it a dark, cold and dirty holiday evening. As I buttoned up some more and tightened my hoodie, I watch two immaculately dressed suits with impeccable hair walk out into the winter, and quickly freeze in their fashionista garb. Shuddering, they turn back and ask the doorman for a cab. Within minutes, they disappear in a freezing cloud of exhaust.

I have a pocketful of money thanks to a well-earned travel allowance and was out for some last-minute shopping. I stop at the end of the drive-in and breathe some cold air, before I turn onto the street. It's dark and in one of the small doorways of those mini-diners offering eggs, bacon, toast and coffee for only $1.99, there sat someone who obviously was shivering to death. Barely two metres away I notice that he has this hood similar to those a Sith Overlord would wear. His bare hands are incredibly wrinkled and rest on his shaking knees.

I got closer and quickly thought about the money burning a hole in my pocket and decided to help him out. I couldn't help but feel for this shivering soul and his incredible need for food and shelter. His face hidden by his ominous hood, he held his hand out. His hands shook so hard it gave me the chills. I felt the harsh cold and wondered how cold could this guy be, sitting there and begging for handout. My fingers grasp a crisp bill and I hand it to him. It was a $100 offer, but he didn't want to take it. "It's too much," he said.

I replied, "No, it's not. You need it more than I do." His shaking hand reached out and took the money. He looked up at me, all wrinkly and gnarly, then smiled with happiness. His features brightened up with that smile and wished me a Merry Christmas. I had an epiphany and this wonderful feeling welled up inside me when I saw his smile. A tear ran down my face, but it quickly froze on my cheek. I quickly scooted out of there and headed towards the whining tires and frozen slushy streets of downtown Montreal.

To this day, I think about this poor man and wonder if I made a difference in his life. But in fact, it made a difference to me. Whenever I think of that moment, it still stirs up these emotions in me and makes me remember what giving really means. It really means giving – what more can I say?

In return, the good feeling we get and the fact that we can't regret it either makes it worthwhile for one's own self-worth and signals one's desires to check those indicators within you, to give more often. Most times, this sense of self-gratification and esteem boosting can last a full year. This is good, once a year. We often celebrate other occasions and spend much more than charity, but I guess karma balances it out down the road.

For that poor guy I helped that night, I hope it was worth it for him and hopefully it turned into a bed and some meals for a few days. I was pretty confident he wasn't some desperate drug addict and probably had a much better life before, or at worse, was suffering from something he regretted later in life so it made me feel Christmas in its rough reality for those who cannot help themselves and are homeless and destitute. Give a little – or a lot – and perhaps it might make the world a little better.

Regional Radio Show on Housing
from the Capital Works and Services Department / Housing and ownership in the Cree Nation
Wednesday January 18, 2017 from 12:15 to 12:45
Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie
CAPITAL WORKS & SERVICES
Your host:
Lawrence P. Katapatuk
Regional Housing Planner
Join us on JBCCS
(James Bay Cree Communications Society)
every third Wednesday of every month
LIVE from
Oujé-Bougoumou
We need community members' input, suggestions and comments concerning housing in the Cree Nation.

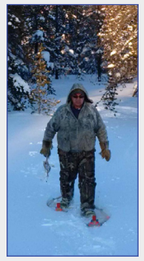
In partnership with Air Creebec

The Best of the James Bay

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

The results of the Best of the James Bay survey we sent out a few months back are in! While we admit this is not a scientific poll, we are certainly pleased and very amused by the hilarious answers that several of our respondents provided. Our apologies if your name or business is misspelled, we did the best with the names that were submitted and not all of them turned up in our Google searches or in the James Bay phonebook.

Everyone who was nominated for an individual category was entered into a random draw for our grand prize of free return flights from Eeyou Istchee to Montreal or from Montreal to Eeyou Istchee for winners and a guest. A big thanks to Air Creebec and congratulations to our winner Josie Cox! Please contact news@nationnews.ca or Joshua Grant at 514-272-3077 to claim your prize.



Josie Cox, Traditional Dancer & Grand Prize Winner

Without further ado, here is your Best of the James Bay for 2016:

1a. Best community contribution (male)
Tommy Bobbish, honourable mention Brian Bearskin, Roy Neacappo and Gregory Louttit

1b. Best community contribution (female)
Daisy House, honourable mention Deborah Wapachee, Ancita Bugden, Heather House, Paula Petawabano and Cindy Coonishish

2a. Most outstanding Elder (male)
Robbie Matthew

2b. Most outstanding Elder (female)
Jane Kitchen, Beulah Stewart, Bestie Jolly

3a. Most outstanding Youth (male)
Jane Kitchen, Beulah Stewart, Bestie Jolly

3b. Most outstanding Youth (female)
Elton John Salt, Kimberly Wapachee

4. Most outstanding Tallyman
Connor Zephyrine, Elmer Cookish, Charles Cheezo

5. Best hunter
George Petawabano, Tom Henry Shecapio, Gregory Louttit, Terence Audlarock

6. Loudest hunter
Jerry Coon

7. Best fisherperson
Paul Bobbish, honourable mention Gaston Cooper

8. Fastest goose plucker
Willie Sam, Rock Sheshamush, Laura Wapachee Gray, Alice MacLeod

9. Best storyteller (legends, hunting stories...)
Fred Tomatuk, Thomas Coon

10. Best bush camp
Adam Chiskamish, Mirage, LG-3 (km 10 past the dam), Roggan River, Louise Joliette

11. Best politician
Matthew Mukash

12. Most disliked politician (Cree/non-Cree)
Donald Trump

13. Best public speaker
Keith Bearskin

14. Most likely to change the system
Robert Baribeau

15. Most likely to lead us in the next generation
Rodney Mark, Robert Baribeau

16. Best police officer
George Shem, Shannon Nakogee

17. Best social worker
Damien Spencer

18. Best teacher
Eric Grimstead, Edith Matoush, Nikki Baribeau, the late Martha Bearskin

19a. Best athlete (male)
Adam Cheezo, honourable mention: Carey Price and Shea Weber

19b. Best athlete (female)
Thia Bearskin

20a. Best cook (male)
"me"

20b. Best cook (female)
"my Mom"

21a. Best artist (male)
Darwin Sam

21b. Best artist (female)
Angel Baribeau

22. Best coach
Trevor Monahan

23. Best fiddler
Johnny Shecapio

24a. Best musician (male)
Pakesso Mukash

24b. Best musician (female)
Kimberly Wapachee

25. Best band/musical group
Cree Rising

26. Best drumming group (Cree or non-Cree)
Roy Neacappo's gang

27. Best traditional dancer
Joshua Iserhoff, Amy Fireman and Brenda Rose Wapachee

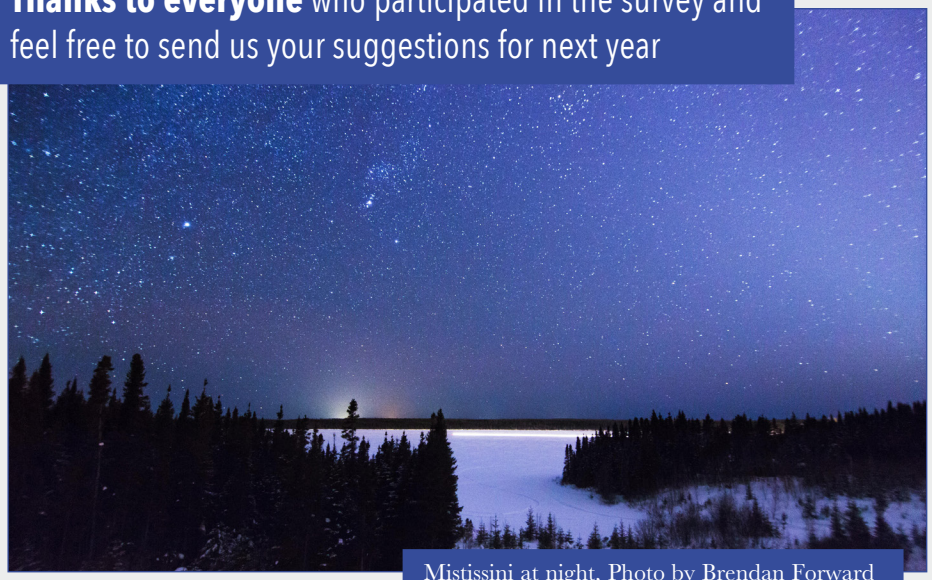
28. Best square dancer
Joshua Iserhoff, Amy Fireman and Brenda Rose Wapachee

29. Biggest cultural contribution
William Cox, Jamie Moses, Kenny Blacksmith

30. Best powwow/summer games
Fort George Mamoweedow

See next page...

Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey and feel free to send us your suggestions for next year



Mistissini at night, Photo by Brendan Forward

31. Best traditional craftsperson
Abraham Cox Sr. and Tim Whiskeychan
32. Best Cree media personality
Romeo Saganash, honourable mention: David Hodges, Will Nicholls
33. Best Cree entity/corporation
Cree Construction (CCDC)
34. Best Cree employer
Cree Construction (CCDC)
35. Funniest Cree
Gabriel Herodier, Robert Baribeau
36. Biggest gossip
Alexa Jolly, Gregory Louttit, cake drama, Waskaganish, Stephanie Maskino, Sandra Shecapio
37. Smartest Cree
The late Lawrence Jimiken
38. Best nickname
Jigela Clarence Lameboy, Sawe (Terrence Duff), Willow (Gabriel Audlarock), Mitsch Edward Nine o' Clock
39. Cree closest to sainthood
Chief Darlene Cheechoo
40. Best yard
Andy Baribeau
41. Best logo (entities, corporations)
Gestion ADC, Big River Transport, Cree Women's Association
42. Coolest vehicle (car, boat, truck, etc…)
Kyle Mark's Dodge Ram, Andrew Coonishish's boat
43. Nicest person
Wabinjuksh Wapachee
44. Nicest smile
Gloria Tanoush, Curtis Bearskin, Judy Cooper, Mariah Gordon, Melissa Smithman
45. Best pool player
Charles W. Bobbish aka Junior, Damien Spencer, Sharon Blackned, "that guy who beat me in Radisson"
46. Best checkers player
"that old guy there"
47. Best spot for UFO sighting
James Bay Highway, "the sky"
48. Most charitable Cree company/entity
Cree Construction (CCDC)
49. Best band council
Chisasibi
50. Worst band council
Waswanipi

CONSUMER AWARDS

1. Best auto dealer
Hardy Ringuette
2. Best snowmobile dealer
Sports Plein Air Gagnon
3. Best restaurant
Michuap
4. Worst restaurant
Waswanipi Cafeteria
5. Best hamburger
Dionne Burger, Pashmoar, Carlo's Chip Stand, Camp Némiscau CCDC
6. Best pizza
Boston Pizza, Delissio, Pash Moar Pizza
7. Best bar/club
Whapmagoostui Social Club
8. Best grocery store
IGA
9. Rowdiest bar
Sharx
10. Best hotel
Waastooskun Inn Chisasibi, Jimmy Ekomiak's house
11. Best hunting supplies
Cree Sports, Nord Select
12. Best fishing supplies
Cree Sports, Northern, Nord Select
13. Best sports supplies
Cree Sports
14. Best bridal shop
Northern
15. Best flower shop
Northern
16. Best jewellery store
Northern
17. Best children's store
Toys R' Us
18. Best furniture shop
Ameublement, "the dump"
19. Best music shop
Northern
20. Coolest clothing store
Northern
21. Cheapest clothing store
Northern
22. Best gift shop
Radisson gift shop
23. Best hair salon
Hair by Flair
24. Best hairdresser
Minnie Bullfrog, Anita Spencer
25. Favourite airline
Air Creebec
26. Best overall business
Creeco (CCDC)
27. Friendliest staff/best service
Hampton Inn
28. Best tournament
Chisasibi senior tournament
29. Wildest tournament
Val-d'Or senior tournament
30. Favourite music album
Dreams by the NorthStars, James Bay Cree compilation
31. Favourite musical group
The NorthStars
32. Best Cree business
Piimii Plus

Be *Winter Active!*

Winter Active events will take place in your community from January 21 to March 18, 2017.

Want to join in the fun? Contact your local CHR or Community Public Health Department.

More info:
Wally Rabbitskin
418 923-2204 extension 42365
418 923-2564 (fax)
wrabbitskin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Kino Québec

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de choisir Air Creebec.
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MEILLEURS VOEUX
pour Noël et
la Nouvelle Année!

THANK YOU
for flying Air Creebec
BEST WISHES
to you and your family
this Christmas and
in the New Year

ᒋ ᓇᓴᐺᒥᑎᓂᓇᓄ
ᐊᑦ ᐊᐱᑎᑕᔭᐢᐺ ᐊᖅ ᐧᑭᐱᐦ
ᑲᒪ ᒋᔨᐧᐊᑦ ᐃᐧᑲᓄ ᒋᔦᐱᐤᐃᑯᔭᐺ
ᑎᐧᐊᐣ ᑭᔭ ᒥᔨᐧᐊᑦ ᑎᑐᒍᒪᐧᐊᓕᐣ
ᐅ ᐃ ᐊᖅ ᒥᐺᓴᑎᓕᐣ ᑭᔭ
ᐃ ᐊᖅ ᐅᓴᑎ ᐱᐳᐣ

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